

PEACE SONNETS

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1915

by JESSIE WISEMAN GIBBS





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He is our peace.—Paul

How is it that ye do not discern this time?—Jesus

AUTHOR'S NOTE

A WORD of explanation is necessary to give the reader the view-point of the various sonnets in this collection. The first twenty of them were written over a year before the great war began, or was dreamed of on this side the Atlantic, the initial number having been a contribution to the first discussion as to whether the canal tolls dispute should be submitted to arbitration. The twenty-first number was written in view of possible conflict with Mexico, at the time when American war ships were first sent to Vera Cruz. The remaining thirty-six were, as can be seen, inspired by the war.

A few of the sonnets here presented have already appeared in the religious press, or in the author's former volume of lyrics, entitled "Overtones."

J. W. G.

I

O my dear Country, thou canst never dare
Deny the Court of Peace! Thou, who art hope
Of the world's weary nations; 'neath the slope
Of whose spread wings they seek a sheltering care
Like to the care of God! Thou, who must share
Christ's saving travail for their sons, who grope
Through toil to thee; must in thy members cope
With all their war, in strength of naught but prayer!

Nay, but thou must be first to own that Court
And set it as a crown upon the brow
Of Christ, the King of Nations; first must thou
Confess his heavenly rule thy last resort,
Even as it is: so shall He judge thy cause
And stablish it in his unfailing laws!

II

Why trust we yet in enginery of war,
O Country of my heart, who have a King
Who has no need of any such a thing?
Who makes us free within, and doth abhor
Aught save the gift of life and freedom, nor
Is willing one should perish? Think we the sting
Of death to 'scape, with vain imagining—
To deal therein, and still his life implore?

Lo, the hour has struck for peace, and we have heard
Christ in our heart speak "Peace!" It is thy hour,
My Country! O shrink not its regnant power,
But stand forth in the strength that Christ doth
give—

Speak peace, that thou and all the lands may live,
Ere thou and they all perish by the sword!

III

So shalt thou own thy Savior, King, and find
His power; so shall the nations own how great
Thy youth and virtue, that could slough the weight
That crushed the world, and dare be free and kind;
So shall the peace of his untrammelled mind
Rule thine own inward strifes of social hate;
So shalt thou plant that universal state
Wherein his love shall be at last enshrined.

So shalt thou bring again the angels' song;
So shall the star be seen again in Heaven;
So shall the nations look to it and long
For the salvation to God's people given;
So shall the Savior promised to all earth,
Through thy pure travail have his modern birth!

IV

Thou shalt not find Him till thou be so great
To give Him to the world: his truth, his peace,
Are known in sharing; evermore increase
From man to man, from loyal state to state;
For they may not be bound, but still must wait
Fulfillment till the last despite shall cease
And all men freely share them. Yet if these
Things seem a mystery, know, before too late:

If states of thine may not lift up the hand
Against thee; if thy striker may not reach
To strike with steel; if tribes that in thee stand
May war no more, but dwell as friend with friend;
Then thou must practice this that thou dost teach
And say among the nations, "War must end!"

V

Lo, now, how Christ doth overcome the world!
Yet we, who bear his name, are feared of it;
Yea, tremble, and conform ourselves to fit
Its will, who should be transformed and unfurled
In power to do his righteousness, who hurled
The planets in their orbits, and who lit
The spark of life within us, infinite,
To blaze when systems are in ashes curled!

But if we dared be free in Him, and say
Among the nations, "He is King indeed,
"And by his truth alone will we be freed!"
There's not a kindred the blue ocean laves
Would dare to stand before us, more than they
Who went to capture Him with swords and staves!

VI

Ye nations of the earth, have ye not said,
“We will increase our strength with ships and guns”?
Yet now do they consume your little ones,
And while ye think to make your bullets red
In brothers’ blood, in your own house lie dead
Your children; for God chastens so his sons,
Bringing the ill they practice whence it runs
Back to recoil at last on their own head.

But if ye once had known your Father, God,
Ye could not lift the hand against your brother;
And if ye once had felt his chastening rod,
Would leave to Him the vengeance; if ye knew
The mighty fortress He hath given to you
In these, your children, ye would ask no other.

VII

Behold the missionaries of Christ's cross,
That go before the merchant ventures! These,
More than all ships of war, bring in the peace
Of the world, and what they spend is never loss.
Think, if we gave the heathen but our dross
Of vice and war-craft, how their hordes would seize
Our weapons to despoil us, and appease
With smell of our spilt blood their lustful joss!

Nay, we must give them Christ, or on our head
Their sin shall be, and God unto their strife
Shall give us up to chastisement; our pelf
Shall profit us no more, when we are dead:
For selfishness doth still defeat itself,
And sacrificial love is fount of life.

VIII

I sing the soldiers of the coming wars,
The wars of God and man, of common weal
And individual glory. Not with steel
Nor for destruction, pass their shining corps
Where all our modern tumult sweats and roars;
But girt with faith, love, prayer,—how e'er they feel
The iron in their own souls—to save and heal,
And Christ leads on, who all to God restores!

These be thy heroes, O my Country! They
Shall wear henceforth thy laurel and thy bay!
Thou shalt not give again the crown of thorns
To Him who is thy Savior, nor the ray
And aureole of glory that adorns
His brow to them that pillage and that slay!

IX

'T is not enough, my Land, that thou shouldst cry
To Christ to save, but thou must crown Him King
Ere He can save thee; thou must dare to fling
Thine all on Him and trust Him, live or die,
Ere thou canst find his power, or live thereby.
Behold, how beautiful his feet, that bring
Good news of peace! Behold Him in the spring
Of glorious day, descending from on high!

Hail Him, my Country! Crown Him, whom so long
Men dared deny the crown! Whom God doth crown
In Heaven before the angels, who with song
Acclaim Him King forever, casting down
Their diadems before Him, choosing Him
Before all glory in themselves grown dim!

X

Hail Him! For it is He who left his throne
In glory and came down to earth and men,
To lift them with his own hands up again
Into that heavenly light that was his own
Before the world was! Hail Him, who has known
Our sorrows, shared our burdens, borne our pain,
In his own body—yea, our sins amain—
O'ercoming all in his love's might alone!

Hail Him victorious! Hail Him conqueror
And King forever! Own Him with thy whole
Heart, O my Country, even as the soul
That lives by his great life! Have thou no shame
To speak of Him before the kings that war,
But let the whole earth hear thee praise his name!

XI

Crown Him with many crowns, United States!
A crown for every one—one crown for all!
Crown Him, ye thousand cities, great and small!
Crown Him, ye villages and farms, whose gates
Teem with the future! Crown Him, Magistrates,
Governors, President! Before Him fall
And vow yourselves the vassals of his thrall!
Crown Him, each soul that for God's Kingdom waits!

Call Him our Counsellor, our mighty God,
Our everlasting Father, Prince of Peace,
Whose Kingdom in our hearts can never cease;
Who plants the life of God in us to grow
And bring forth healing for the nations—O
He shall bring down all Heaven upon our sod!

XII

Proclaim Him, Stars and Stripes, upon all seas;
Till men shall say throughout thy voyagings,
“ ’Tis Christ’s undying love the banner flings
“Forth in its red; his purity decrees
“In its white; in its stars of Heaven, his truth. With
these
“Great glories wrapt, their eagle soars, who brings
“Christ’s healing in the spreading of his wings,
“Where farthest rivers pour, or oceans freeze!”

O thou shalt live, my Country, and be free,
By Him alone, whose power alone can save!
And if thou lose Him, thou hast but the grave!
And if thou fail Him now in craven fears,
And fail the world his love would save through thee,
Then God must try again, a thousand years!

XIII

Lo, how we are entangled in the coil
Of precedents! How we hedge up our way
With Heaven-high walls of what men do and say,
Until we see not God! How we embroil
Us with conformity—an endless toil!—
Till in the labrinth we are spent and stay,
Hopeless to be delivered, afraid to pray,—
Trusting at last what doth our strength despoil!

But God's not so! For then He lets us die
And calls a child and sets him in the midst,
And a new nation. So of old Thou didst,
O God! So dost Thou till thy Kingdom come!
How long, O Lord, how long? And shall we lie
Us down so mazed and spent and overcome?

XIV

So shall we die, my Country; yea, and thou,
That gloriest in thy strength and stretchest thee
As a young giant forth from sea to sea—
So shalt thou perish, if thou choose not now
Thy God against the world. For if thou bow
To the world's idols, thou shalt surely see
The bitter doom of their captivity
And drink thy sin in that despairing slough!

But now, whilst thou art young, is time to choose:
As for the lands, let them do what they will;
But as for thee, with all thy heart, choose God;
For none can stand against his righteous rod,
And they who seek its shelter cannot lose
The comfort, the green fields, and waters still.

XV

Rejoice, my Land, and glory in thy youth!
Be thou not as the nations, dead in sin;
But be alive to God, renewed within
To know his will and overflow in ruth
Unto the world's end. Suffer not the tooth
Of time to prey upon thee, nor begin
To feel thy tides set inward, but still win
A higher freedom through a higher truth!

God bless thee! God be in thee! God set on
Thy courts his heavenly glory; give Christ's face
To shine on every child, in every place
Of thy dominion; give thee righteousness
And peace, within, without; give, through his Son,
All power to thee to curse not, but to bless!

XVI

America! New World! Empire of Man!
Hope of the nations! Land of destiny,
Wherein the whole world looks to be set free!
Think'st thou to bind the races with a ban
Of peace, who hated since the world began?
For black, red, brown, white, yellow, meet in thee;
And wilt thou teach them all one fealty?
And be to all one mother, if thou can!

Hope not to do it by any earthly thing;
But only by Himself, who is the King
Of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Almighty Son
Of God and man, whose love hath power to bring
All men of every race and clime in one
Unto his Father, till his will be done!

XVII

O for the prophet's vision to discern
The things of thy dear peace, to read for thee
The inner secret of all history!
O for the will in thee to look and learn!
What were those mighty forces that could burn
Up nations into empires?—Look and see:
Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and he,
The fierce Mogul, Napoleon,—each in turn!

Their spirits gone, how soon their realms decayed!
And shall we take the world to us and think
To stand, one body, with no soul arrayed
Therein as King of all? The devil enticed
Us to this thought, who would that we should sink
To ruin with the rest,—but crown we Christ!

XVIII

Think you if those six thousand murderers
Who wrought their deeds of blood in us last year
Had had the spirit of Christ, we had had fear?
Think you if those uncounted worshippers
Of lust and mammon which our age incurs
Through ignorance of God, had dared to rear
Their bloody idols up amongst us here,
If we had had his spirit in us, sirs?

Hear, O my Brothers! Iron bars nor laws
Shall ever save us, but his secret art;
And love of Him is more than all police
And ships of war to keep our realm in peace;
And this is our great policy, to cause
Each child to know and love Him in his heart!

XIX

O that the perfect faith would issue here!
That scales of doubt and selfishness and pride,
That blind our eyes, would fall before the tide
Of rising light wherein Christ doth appear
Alone, supreme, divinely near and dear
To each and all; until we did abide
In Him, one body, instinct and glorified
By his great life and love, that cast out fear!

O Christ, Desire of Nations! God and man!
We long for Thee! Our heart and flesh cry out
For Thee, till Thou be formed in us, our Son
And Savior, our Immanuel! We can
But seek Thee till we find Thee, till all doubt
Be vanquished, and thy glorious Kingdom won!

XX

Lo, thou, my Land, art God's new Israel,
And He has held, close in his counsels furled,
Till thy full time, this Canaan of the world,
And called thy children forth therein to dwell
From the world's bondage, that Immanuel
Might reign in thee at last, and throngs that swirled
About thee should return through all the world,
Bearing his blessings forth, that in thee well.

Thy federal law is his great Kingdom's law;
Thy dream of one in many, his dream of
The race; O if He reign in thee and draw
All men to Him, his glorious life and love
Shall loose the law, the dream, in life,—send forth
His liberty of love through all the earth!

XXI

If we must fight, my Country, let it be
For sake of love and peace and duty plain;
Let history not say we filled with slain
For vengeance or vainglory, vauntingly,
One field of earth; but sorrowing, as he
Who smites his son to guide him and restrain,
And as the world's Redeemer, for our gain,
Suffered and died upon Mount Calvary.

So shall our soul be clear of blood, save the
Pure blood of his great travail, which He lays
On us to bear with Him in these last days;
Our sons who die in such a cause shall be
The blessed martyrs of his Kingdom's rise
And come again with Him from Paradise.

XXII

Ye peoples who profess to worship Christ,
Ye kings who claim Him for your Overlord,
Ye parliaments who hear his saving word,
Ye souls who live by what He sacrificed,—
In what an evil hour are ye enticed
Of this world's Prince to lift the murderous sword
Against each other,—ye, whose treasures horde
A love that for the world's peace had sufficed!

Are ye not traitors to your Sovereign King,
Whom He would bring in one, to do this thing?
Who then shall save you when the heathen laugh?
Hope ye yet in the sword, to live thereby?
The sword, wherein ye trust, shall turn and quaff
Your blood, and by it ye shall surely die!

XXIII

I said in haste, "O for the famine or
"The pestilence, to make us think on God!"
I knew not what I said, nor how his rod
Would smite the nations with this awful war!
If we have need of signs, what look we for
More than this bubbling blood, by blind hate sod,
Dishonored and cast out on every clod,
Which should be of Christ's life inheritor?

O be thou wiser, my Beloved: know
They live by Him in whom his spirit dwells
Of faith and love! They triumph who dare show
The godlike deeds thereof! But Satan quells
Their valor, and they perish in defeat
Who doubt with doubt and hate with hatred meet!

XXIV

How shall we pray for them, O God, who say
They are of Christ, and do the works of Cain,
Who mind no more that they are men, nor chain
Within their bosoms the wild beasts of prey,
But let them forth to ravish and to slay,
Putting their trust in Satan and his train?
Yet are we of their kindred and their strain—
For their peace and our own, we can but pray!

Yet not for peace alone, but righteousness
And truth, wherein are peace that shall endure,
And love, which is alone the perfect cure
Of all their ills and ours, the potent law
Of Heaven's Kingdom, that must surely draw
The nations to its sway, ere Thou canst bless.

XXV

We made such outward show of being fair,
Were so untroubled, so self-gratified,
We liked no more to hear what foul germs plied,
Of the old plague, within us, nor were 'ware
How sore we needed a Physician's care,
While the hid ulcer gathered in our side;
But now it hath burst forth and we can hide
No more our shame, which to the world is bare.

Gone is the lying refuge, the false calm
And pride! In utter helplessness we cry,
"Is there in Christendom no healing balm,
"And no Physician there with saving skill?
"God of all mercy, hear us, ere we die!
"Send Him to us, that we may do his will!"

XXVI

I see through this most sacrilegious feast
Of lust and blood, a hand come on the wall
Of modern palaces and write the fall
Of kings; for from the greatest to the least,
They have been weighed in balances and ceased
From honor, having been found wanting, all,
Bringing the world again to brutish brawl:
Therefore shall they be cast out as the beast,

Until they know that God is more than they;
And these their kingdoms God shall take away
From them and give to Him who rules by right
Divine of love, and by its perfect might;
Who leads his subjects into peace, not strife,
And suffers death, Himself, to give them life.

XXVII

Though thou must suffer, my Beloved, yet
Stand fast in Christ's great spirit, reaching out
Strong hands of love and prayer; though they flout
Or wound thee, never falter, nor forget
Thy Savior, who is more than thou, but let
His Voice ring through thy voice with instant shout
To pierce the maddened tumult and the rout,
"I am your peace! I paid its bloody debt!"

The world shall hear that Voice! Believe and love!
Fail not thy Lord nor them in this dread hour!
He shall not fail thee, but will give thee power
To be new-born into his Kingdom. They
In after time shall call thee servant of
Our God, and bringer of his Kingdom's sway!

XXVIII

The earth is God's, the continents and seas,
The islands and the inland streams and lakes,
Each gloomy fern and golden fin that shakes
In water, each glad wing that beats the breeze
Of air, all ores and gems that melt and freeze
In hidden ducts of mountains; for He makes
Them all, and all the seeds of life, and wakes
Anew each year the beasts and grass and trees.

And ye, O Nations, do but hold in trust
A little while this wealth of his for all
His children, and should in one council call
On Him for strength to minister such stores
In honor; but ye slay the heirs and thrust
Them forth, to seize the inheritance for yours!

XXIX

Above the noise of battle and the cry
Of wounded and of dying, the vast groans
Of wasted provinces, the gathered moans
Of widows and of orphans, through the sky
I hear a Voice of lamentation high
As Heaven, a Voice of love and tears whose tones
Bewailed of old the city's doomèd stones,
That would not own her King when He was nigh.

How oft' would I have gathered you, O States,
O Races, in my saving Kingdom's fold,
But ye would not!—But still without the gates
Slew Me, nor knew your day of visitation,
Desiring this day, whereof I foretold
That it should bring such wrath and desolation!

XXX

Has Christ failed, then, in Europe? Nay, but her
Philosophers, her diplomats, her courts
Have failed Him, trusting not his heavenly forts
Of faith and love, nor daring from them stir
In valor of his cross, to minister
His life. Therefore for refuge she resorts
To fear and hate, and all her host reports
In camp of the Eternal Murderer.

Christ cannot fail, but He is still the Prince
Of Peace. The Prince of this World faileth since
The world began, and he shall always fail;
He is the Enemy and Christ, the Friend,
Who by his love shall mightily prevail
And of whose Kingdom there shall be no end.

XXXI

Think we that those on whom this tower of ill
Descends, whose blood is mingled thus in vain
With hopeless sacrifices, who so strain
To bring forth good from evil, and fulfil
Their own destruction while they waste and kill,
Think we that they above all lands profane
God's will, and so in chastisement obtain
His judgment, from which we are scatheless still?

I tell you nay, but except we repent,
Ourselves shall likewise perish: for we feed
Bread of our children to the war-god's greed
And with unholy mammon are defiled,
And turn away the face of our own child
From Christ, and know not our impoverishment!

XXXII

America, behold how the world hangs
This day upon thy virtue—thine alone;
How Europe reaps the whirlwind she hath sown
Of hellish hate, that unto Heaven clangs,
Mocking her God and Savior's travail pangs
For men's redemption; how the heathen groan
In darkness by such darkness overblown,
Meeting therein the serpent's poison fangs!

O purge thyself! O fall before the cross!
O clasp it to thy breast, and count but loss
The will and pride of men, if Christ appear
In thee with love that God's own bosom gives,
And never can be quelled, but giving, lives,
And brings earth's blackest night all Heaven's cheer!

XXXIII

God bless our President! In such an hour,
When warring nations, blind with tears and blood,
O'ermastered by fierce passions as a flood,
Confront the last dread terror in the power
Of darkness that on all their lands doth lower,
And see his face among the stars that stud
The sky, serene, above the stormy scud—
God make of him a refuge and a tower!

As thou hast hope in God, America,
And in his Kingdom, pray for him of yours
Who stands before the nations and implores
That hope; that heavenly grace and stamina
May be in him, to make the matchless worth
Of Christ, the King, appear upon the earth!

XXXIV

The minds of kings are dark ; their thoughts are cast
In molds of a dead era, when they traced
Their way to thrones through wars, and ever braced
Themselves thereon by wars ; they still hold fast
To that unholy refuge of the past,
Not knowing how a new age hath effaced
Their covenant with death, and firmly based
The strength of nations in Heaven's life, at last.

But we are of the future ; we are free ;
And looking from the future's height, we see
A new United States, of Europe, rise
Out of her ashes and her agonies,
And bid her hail, and cry the King of Kings
Hasten to gather her beneath his wings !

XXXV

No kingdom built in force can ever stand,
For force is outward and can never reach
The heart, but still the heart will rise and teach
Its impulse and its passion to the hand;
But God hath laid his Kingdom, deep and grand,
In love, and there's no language and no speech
Where the still voice of love may not beseech
And win men's hearts to its divine command.

Who, then, is the world-statesman who foresees
That Kingdom come, and brings its reign of peace?
'Tis he who takes Christ's cross and hides it deep
In human hearts, while nations wake and sleep,
And the supreme world-wisdom is that of
His lavish and uncalculating love.

XXXVI

The soul is infinite: the whole world lies,
Of peace and discord, hope and fear, praise, blame,
Heavenly glory and infernal shame,
Folden within its possibilities;
And he who scorns the spirit is not wise;
For out of it all strength and weakness came,
And it alone survives the wreck and flame,
And on it still the social pillars rise.

And I have seen Heaven's Kingdom fully come
Within a soul disordered and accursed
As this old, sin-sick, warring world, at worst,
Bringing it forth with power to a new birth
Of life and peace; and this is all my sum
Of hope to see that Kingdom come on earth.

XXXVII

It seems that this so solid-looking ground
Is but a thin crust, yet, o'er fires of Hell
That rage still in earth's womb, and none can tell
What moment they with rushing, roaring sound
Will burst abroad before him and confound
The blessed day with smoke and ashes fell,
Foul fumes and molten streams unstanched,
And he and all his hopes therein be drowned.

For earth's old harlotries still bring forth death
And men will ne'er be safe upon the earth
Till she be purged of that infernal birth
And yield her wholly to the Heavenly Sun
Of Righteousness, who since the world begun,
Breathed in her Heaven's life and Heaven's breath.

XXXVIII

Of old when men were children and conceived
Of God as one who loved their little tribe,
While other tribes had other gods, to gibe
And jeer at theirs, and hate in Heaven grieved
Men's souls to dare the slaughter they believed
God's will for earth, war was a boast the scribe
Could chronicle and poets might ascribe
Glory to him who most despite achieved.

But now men know one God and Father of
Them all, one Elder Brother, whose dear love
Is Heaven's law for earth: war is revealed
A deed most blasphemous, profaning sky
And earth, a most unnatural crime, the yield
Of perfidy and infidelity.

XXXIX

This war is from beneath and from above,
Not of the nations, only, but that same
Old conflict of the Beast, whose other name
Is Self, and of the Christ, whose name is Love;
And men and nations are the spoil thereof;
For the Beast comes to kill and steal and maim,
And Christ to heal, to ransom and reclaim,
And men in ranks of each have ever strove.

It is the last fierce onslaught of the Beast,
For now the world sees his jaws drip with slime
Of its heart's blood, and feels his talons tear
Its vitals, and its miseries increased
Past suffering, till turning to Christ's care,
It trust his saving banners for all time.

XL

Build no more ships of war, my Land, no more :
For we must fight upon Christ's side in this
Great strife ; but if we cower 'neath guns that hiss
With fires of Hell, and trust its cannon's roar,
We take the arch-fiend for our commodore,
And are already lost, and shall not miss
To be dragged down by him to the abyss
Wherein the nations perish at our door.

Heed not thy lying prophets, who are of
This world ; have faith in God, and thou shalt build
Ships of salvation, and they shall be filled
With armies of the blood-red cross of love,
And thou shalt send them east and west, to win
Christ's peaceful victories o'er death and sin.

XLI

We can perceive, at last, the world is one,
And we shall save ourselves when we have saved
The nations, and the way to life is paved
Through travail and through sacrifice, and none
Shall see God's great salvation 'neath the sun,
Save in Christ's dauntless spirit, that once craved
To give men life, and through the unseen braved
The fear of death, and life immortal won.

Choose, then, my Land, if thou wilt bear his cross
And live, or bear the sword and die. With Christ
We suffer, but we reign for evermore;
With Satan we shall surely suffer sore
And miserably pass from loss to loss
And perish with all nations he enticed.

XLII

'Tis well we should sit down and count the cost,
If we be able, with our paltry ten
Thousand, to go against a force of men
That number twenty thousand in their host;
So, if we see no hope, ere they have crossed
Our borders, we may send with haste to ken
The grim conditions whereon we again
May live a little while, ere all be lost.

Sure we can never do it in the might
Or power of our own hands, but by the Son
Of God, and by his Spirit, if we have
But faith, the battle is already won,
And the great prize, which is the blessed salve
Of peace for the whole bleeding world, in sight.

XLIII

If we would dip our pens in Heaven's fire,
They would be mightier than the swords of kings;
If we would pray the prayer of faith, that brings
Unfailing answer to sincere desire,
If we would grant God's Spirit to inspire
Our souls with rapture of eternal things,
We should lift up our voice as one that sings,
And walls should fall, and camping hosts expire!

For God hath sought a nation He could use,
One to delight in Him and do his will,
But all were faithless, and in hopeless tears
Received the due fulfillment of their fears;
Last He seeks us—O Spirit that endues
With might, grant us his purpose to fulfil!

XLIV

The tide of time is at the point to turn :
The kingdom of this world, that has prevailed
Upon the face of the whole earth, has failed,
And the great deeps of human passion yearn
Toward a Kingdom whose pure glories burn
Eternal in the Heavens,—that availed
Of old to draw to it the souls it hailed
Out from the welter of their brief sojourn.

Those souls of men are grown a multitude
Innumerable, out of every race,
People and tribe and tongue, and the strong pull
Of that new Kingdom has laid hold for good
On the world's center, till with saving grace
And knowledge of the Lord all earth be full.

XLV

It is a time of peril and of power,
A day of crisis, big with destiny;
But the decisive blow of history
Shall not be dealt with bullets that devour,
Nor by the lands that use them, but in our
Free soul, where Christ and Satan mightily
Wrestle for spiritual victory,
And we shall say who triumphs in this hour.

The Past and Future, Hell and Heaven, Christ
And Satan, meet in the arena here,
And a great cloud of witnesses appear
In Heaven and Hell and all the world, to see
If we have courage that of old sufficed
To overcome the world, and set men free.

XLVI

If we must die (for life is not more dear
Than our most holy cause) then let us die
For Heaven, not for Hell, truth, not a lie,
And fall into God's arms, who shall appear
To raise us from the dead. Yea, let our seer
See God, and let him pray, till we descry
Those chariots and those horsemen of the sky
Who are our only hope, and our last fear.

I know a warfare calls for lives and blood,
Whose soldiers bear no weapon, but the cross,
And think him braver who with ardor high
Goes forth therein than regiments that toss
Their lives to the grim chance of guns. O God,
In that dear warfare let me fight and die!

XLVII

We stand above the nations, and our cause
Is not our own, but God's, and God hath blessed
Us mightily and given us his rest,
And set his Kingdom in our heart, that draws
The peoples to our bosom from the jaws
Of that destructive kingdom, east and west,
That preys upon its children,—that our breast
Might feed the world, our mouth speak Heaven's laws.

And thus saith God, America, "If thou
"Wilt trust in Me, and put the unclean thing
"Away from thee, and take my Son for King,
"And let his Kingdom in thee be unfurled,
"Thou shalt fear nothing, but shalt witness now
"His victory of love o'ercome the world!"

XLVIII

I know the faith that overcomes the world,
Whereat the Prince thereof, who perpetrates
Impious war, doth tremble, and the gates
Of Hell, that have decoyed the lands, impearled
Like gates of Paradise, are rent and hurled
To the foul pit they gloze, and human states
Confess God's law of love, that animates
His Heaven, and surely is on earth unfurled.

It is the faith of Christ, the Son of God,
Savior of souls to life forever young,
Before whose blood-blest rood the blood-curst rod
Of kings must be laid down; who comes, even now,
And every eye shall see Him, every tongue
Confess Him, every knee before Him bow!

XLIX

Hark how each king and emperor declares
That God is on his side—how all appeal
To God to help them murder, waste and steal!
But none appeals to Christ, of whom God swears,
“He is my Son; hear Him!” and not one dares
Assert that Christ is on his side, to feel
The filthy passions of his fiendish zeal;
And Christ’s pure name is not in all their prayers.

The god they cry to, he is of their own
Imaginations, yea, a god outgrown,
And impotent to help as wood or stone;
But as for the eternal God Christ came
To show, they know Him not, and to their shame
They take upon their lips his awful name!

L

This last colossal crime of Christendom
Is fruit of her apostasy and sin
Of unbelief, for Satan enters in
When Christ goes out: there is no vacuum
In spirit, more than flesh, but evils come
On heels of our denials and begin
To work a vast destructive woe wherein
We cry again for faith's palladium.

Thou art not guiltless of this great transgression,
My Country! O God give thee to discern
The meaning of this time, to humble thee,
To own thy sin, with all thy heart to turn
To Christ, ere thou be forced to make confession
Of Him at mouth of Hell's artillery!

LI

War is revelation: in an hour
That men know not, seeds of selfishness,
Fear, suspicion, envy, they caress
In their bosoms, grown to unknown power,
Burst before the world in bloody flower,
All whose dripping petals reconfess
That old revelation alterless,
“Hate is murder,” spoke by Truth’s Avower.

War is judgment: from the ripened grain
It doth pluck the tares at last for burning;
And above it God, the Judge, is turning
To destruction bloody men and vain;
And its sentence is as old as breath
On this blood-soaked planet: “Sin is death!”

LII

War is the mailed hand of criminal states
That strike the helpless down and bind the free
And build an arrogant supremacy
Of selfish force; but the just land that waits
For righteousness and loves God's law, and hates
Iniquity, builds up his courts, and she
Shall not be put to shame therein, but He
Will send his angels forth to guard her gates.

And she shall prosper and shall have a new
Supremacy of service, and the word
Of God shall go forth from her mouth to all
The lands and not return again unheard,
But they shall come from east and west to view
Her great salvation and to own Christ's thrall.

LIII

What one war settles may another war
Unsettle, and what has been won by force
May so be lost again, and in the course
Of dealing death do nations die; therefore
War settles naught, but God is Governor
Who made all men one flesh, not to divorce
Them from each other, and their last resource
Is love, and Christ alone is Conqueror.

But that is settled which is settled right,
And they are free from fear who trust the might
Of the Almighty, and they that deal in love,
Though they may agonize in blood and tears,
Shall never die, but all his power shall prove
And live and reign with Christ a thousand years.

LIV

I take the slur of "peace at any price"
And wear it unashamed with Him, who, when
He was reviled, reviled not again,
But prayed for brutish men who cast their dice
Upon his blood-stained garments, whose foul cries
Mocked his great gift of life their narrow ken
Perceived not, rendering up his soul for men
To God, a free, obedient sacrifice.

I count Him strong, who rendered good for ill,
Love for despite; I count He overcame
The world, and proved the glory of God's will,
The invincibility of faith, the claim
Of love to love; I reckon He indeed
Was free, and by his spirit men are freed.

LV

It is a day of wrath and reckoning
For Europe, but for us a day of pause
And testing. Out of every race, as straws
Sucked by the wind, or as the needles swing
To the pole, we came to share the banqueting
The Wonder Worker spread here, and because
Our flesh is filled, we hail Him with applause
And would take Him by force to make Him King.

But He withdraws and cries, "'Tis not enough
"Ye eat my loaves and fishes! I am Bread
"Of Life! Ye must eat Me! My spirit's puff
"Must be your breath of life! Ye must pursue
"My joy—must clasp the cross whereon I bled,
"If ye would have Me to reign over you!"

LVI

How vainly have we cried "Peace! Peace!" where no
Peace was! How vainly shall the nations patch
A partial, unenforcèd peace, and snatch
A little respite ere the whole world flow
Together in unutterable woe
Of self-destruction; if all men attach
Them not to Heaven's Kingdom, to o'ermatch
All principalities and powers below!

Know, O my Country, this democracy
Thou boastest in, is but a half-way house
Between the City of Destruction and
The Holy City; and thou canst not stand
Therein, but must go back in infamy,
Or forward and the Lamb of God espouse!

LVII

The sword has pierced my bosom and its pain
Consumes me so that outward sights grow dim,
But inwardly my soul has sight of Him
Who came from God unweaponed and was slain,
In whose great death is all our life made plain.
O all God's lightning-girded cherubim
Could but have brought us to destruction grim—
He saved us; through his death we life attain!

Therefore hath God exalted Him on high.
And thou, my Country, that hast dared to love
Humanity and peace, so must thou die
To self and sin and look to God above
To bring his Kingdom through thee and to raise
Thee up therein immortal to his praise.





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